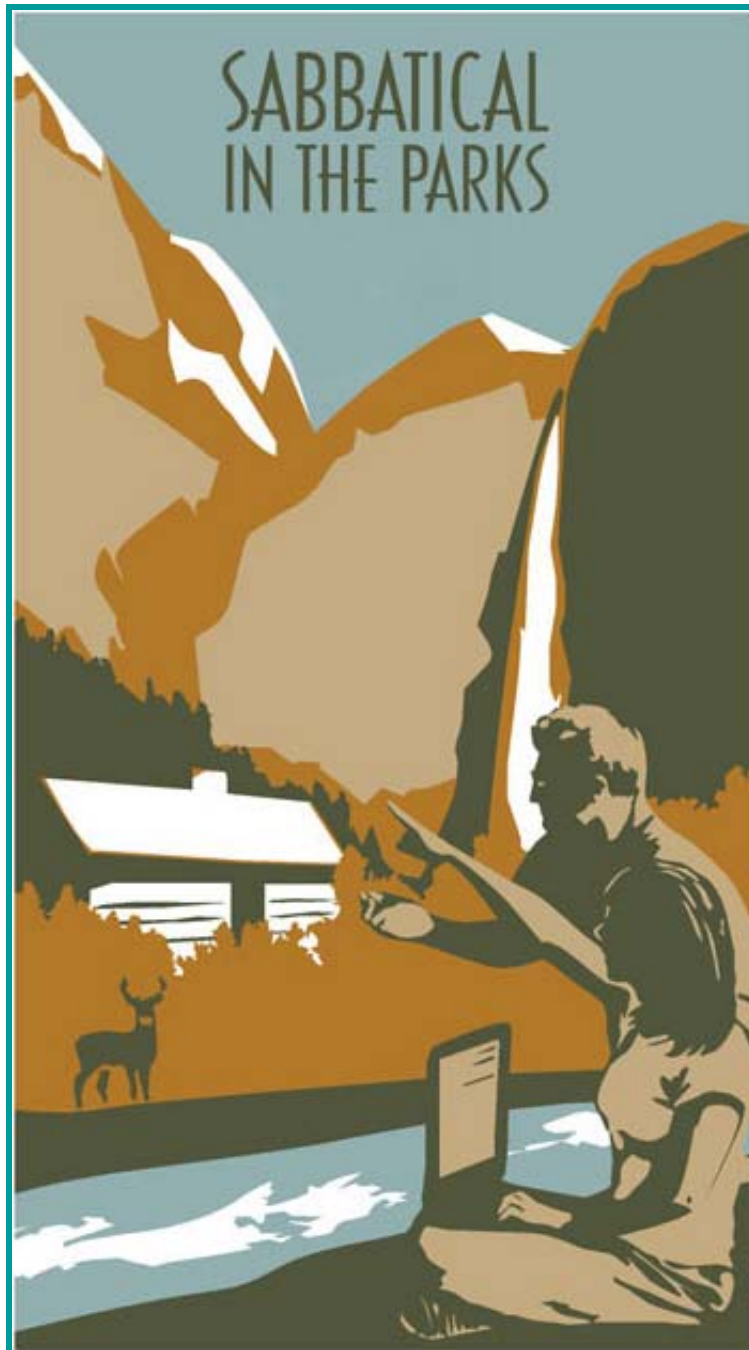




Sabbatical in the Parks Program Information for Faculty





Great Smoky Mountains National
Park
NPS Photo

Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) is charged to preserve the nation's most unique natural and cultural resources. A thorough understanding of those resources is essential to their long-term preservation. Such understanding requires a sound scientific basis. Hence, state-of-the-art science is a necessary and important tool in resource stewardship and the effective management of the National Park System. National parks are also unique laboratories for scientific research.

The NPS has a twofold scientific responsibility: to use the best available science in park management and to encourage research in parks that benefits society as a whole. To effectively undertake these dual responsibilities – "science for parks" and "parks for science" – the NPS must enlist the help of the academic community and facilitate scientific inquiry in the parks.

The Sabbatical in the Parks Program was created to assist in arranging faculty sabbaticals to conduct research and other scholarly activity, that provides usable knowledge for NPS management and/or advances science and human understanding.

The Sabbatical in the Parks Program is open to tenure-track faculty members from four-year institutions of higher education in the U.S., who have successfully competed for sabbaticals according to the procedures of their institution.

The National Park System

The National Park System provides university professors with unique laboratories for research, and outstanding opportunities to contribute to the preservation of the nation's most significant natural and cultural resources. The system is diverse and includes large natural areas, cultural resources, historic sites, recreation areas and more. It includes areas such as Yellowstone National Park, Everglades National Park, Mesa Verde National Park, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park,

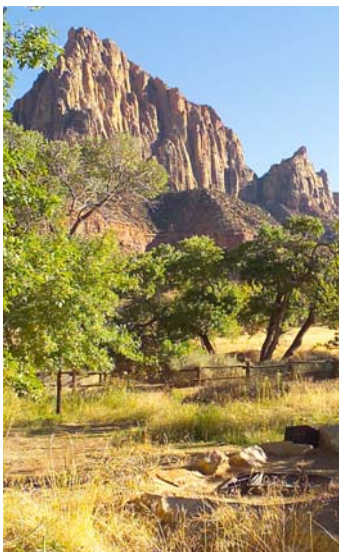
Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Martin Luther King National Historic Site, and many others. With nearly 400 units throughout the United States and its territories, the NPS offers numerous opportunities for sabbaticals within the National Park System. Additional information about the units of the system can be found at the following website: <http://www.nps.gov/parks.html>.

Benefits to Faculty

- National parks provide uncommon and unique field opportunities for research, such as endangered species recovery, archeological investigations, park visitor studies, watershed analysis, and more.
- Working in national parks allows faculty members to ground their academic knowledge in practice, benefiting both their research and teaching.
- Sabbaticals taken in parks will allow faculty members to understand the full potential of such research sites and opportunities for their students and colleagues.
- A NPS sabbatical offers faculty members opportunities to contribute to preserving the nation's natural and cultural resources.
- Taking a sabbatical in a national park will expand the faculty member's professional network and advance the development of future collaborative projects.
- National parks can provide aesthetic settings away from the university to replenish and reinvigorate faculty members.

How the Program Works

The Sabbatical in the Parks Program maintains a *sabbatical clearinghouse* through which sabbatical arrangements are made. Interested faculty submit short proposals and an abbreviated curriculum vitae pertinent to their research to the Sabbatical in the Parks Program coordinator.



Zion National Park
Photo by Denis Defibaugh

All faculty submissions are reviewed by the Sabbatical in the Parks Program coordinator and entered into the clearinghouse database. Faculty research interests are carefully compared with the needs and opportunities of individual park units.

Using information from the sabbatical clearinghouse, interested faculty are then put in direct contact with representatives of the park units. If discussion confirms that a good match exists, an agreement is negotiated by a park liaison and the faculty member, with guidance from the program coordinator. Park sabbaticals of one semester or one year in length can be arranged. All activities conducted by visiting faculty will conform to existing NPS policies on research, scientific collecting, facility use, resource management, interpretation, and education. Upon completion of a sabbatical, each faculty member and park superintendent submit brief evaluations of the sabbatical experience to the clearinghouse.

Examples of Sabbaticals in the Parks

The following examples illustrate some of the ways park sabbaticals can provide valuable opportunities for faculty, inform park management, and offer technical and educational assistance to host parks.

- A Professor of Outdoor Recreation & Resource Management studied interpretive programs at five parks during his sabbatical. The parks were selected for their unique visitor demographics and varying cultural and natural resources. After interviewing interpreters and observing their programs his findings indicated a gap between the overriding NPS philosophy of interpretation and the way it is practiced in the field. Interviews with participants in curriculum-based education programs indicated that students often retained knowledge about park natural resources a year after their visit. His findings were submitted to several journals and he has presented his sabbatical research at several conferences, meetings, and at NPS interpretive training programs.
- In Olympic National Park, a Professor of Geology who specializes in coastal geomorphology and wetlands ecology is investigating physical and biological conditions of the coastline at the mouth of the Elwha River. He is developing protocols for the evaluation of key coastal factors after the scheduled 2008 Elwha River Dam removal. His and future research will allow park officials to determine if dam removal will have returned the coastline to pre-dam conditions. He will also evaluate human behavior and associated impacts on the coastal environment as part of his sabbatical. He will make recommendations for future park development projects to minimize damage to both park facilities and the coastal ecosystem.
- A Professor of Forest Health & Pathology along with a Professor of Geography, Planning & Recreation are on sabbatical together at Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. One is evaluating forest pathogens, and will train park staff in identifying fungi and other specific pathogens found in the park. The other is completing an Environmental Assessment for the park's vegetation management plan which will detail how managers are to treat forest pathogens and other hazards. This sabbatical provides technical assistance and education that fill gaps in skills currently unavailable in the park unit.
- A Professor of Advertising Photography used digital images to explore the social relationships of people in a preserved natural environment during his sabbatical in Zion National Park. He also documented park natural resource conditions with repeat photo-monitoring. His documents provide a baseline for continued visual monitoring of park natural resources, changes in conditions, and resource protection activities. The professor also filled gaps in the park's image collection. His photos serve as important visual tools for park resource managers and interpreters.



Olympic National Park
NPS Photo

Typical Support and Obligations

Each national park has different levels of support it can offer faculty during a sabbatical. Examples of support may include housing, travel costs, and limited research funds. In all cases, modest administrative support is provided. Support is negotiated between the national park and the faculty member, and will vary greatly across the system. However, it is expected that faculty members on sabbatical receive full or partial compensation from their university.

Faculty are encouraged to work on personal research projects during their sabbaticals. Faculty on sabbatical in a national park are also expected to provide some research, technical assistance, and education to the host NPS unit. How much time is spent on each will vary and is negotiated in each case.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will I be paid by the NPS if I take a sabbatical in a park?

In most cases, no. It is expected that faculty members on sabbatical receive full or partial compensation from their university. In some cases, parks may reimburse the faculty member for travel to and from the park. Additional funds are rarely available.

Who may participate in the program?

Faculty members from four-year universities in the United States, who are eligible for sabbatical according to their institution's requirements, may participate. Faculty in the biological, physical, social and cultural sciences are encouraged to participate.

Is housing available?

In some cases, yes. Housing arrangements are made by the individual park unit and may include options for families as well. Some parks may not have available housing. Parks are often remote with rudimentary housing and facilities.

Who will be my contact in the park?

A park sabbatical liaison at the NPS unit will be the initial contact. You may work more closely with other individuals, as appropriate, upon arrival in the park.

When are the deadlines for arranging a sabbatical?

There are no deadlines for arranging a sabbatical. Faculty should express their interest by submitting a short proposal and abbreviated curriculum vitae to the Sabbatical in the Parks Program coordinator well in advance of their sabbatical, so that the necessary arrangements can be made.

What if my sabbatical is not for at least a year or two?

Even if your sabbatical is not immediately scheduled, consider submitting a short proposal and abbreviated curriculum vitae to the Sabbatical in the Parks Program coordinator. Matching through the clearinghouse can be done much in advance of the actual sabbatical.

What support can I expect once I arrive in the park for my sabbatical?

Support will vary for each sabbatical and NPS unit. Arrangements will be made as part of the sabbatical agreement, negotiated by the faculty member and the park with assistance from the program coordinator. Support may include office space, clerical assistance, computer access, and so forth.

How much time will I have to spend on my personal research projects?

Arrangements will vary with each sabbatical and will be specified in the negotiated sabbatical agreement. In general, a faculty member on sabbatical will spend half a day to three days each week in research, technical assistance, or education activities of benefit to the host NPS unit. All other time can be devoted to conducting personal research in the park.

Can a regional or other office of the National Park Service host a faculty member on sabbatical?

Yes. All units and offices of the National Park Service may host sabbaticals. Parks, administrative offices, program centers, and system support offices are able to participate in the Sabbatical in the Parks Program.

For Further Information

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